



THAMES VALLEY

By e-mail to:

aking@englandseconomicheartland.com<aking@englandseconomicheartland.com>;

25th March 2022

Dear Mr King

Swindon – Didcot – Oxford Connectivity Study: Call for Evidence

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture Thames Valley Branch*; thank you for inviting us to contribute.

- What are the key themes for the study area?

The fundamental themes are sustainability, decarbonisation and environmental protection.

- What do you consider to be the key movements in the area?

The key movements are commuting and other local traffic flows within the defined area such as commuting to and from Oxford, Swindon, Didcot and other employment areas combined with the longer distance flows between the west through and the south midlands for which this corridor forms but a part of the total journey, the latter including significant volumes of freight.

- What are the key connectivity opportunities and challenges in the study area?

The challenges are to plan for growth both for local flows and the longer distance movements and to achieve modal shift away from road traffic to more sustainable rail and reducing car volumes in favour of greater use of public transport. The opportunity is to de-carbonise transport within this and the wider south midlands areas.

- What interventions do you think the study should consider?

It should study the scope for increased use of rail for both longer distance flows such as Bristol – Swindon – Oxford – Milton Keynes as well as locally between Swindon – Didcot – Oxford for passenger and the former also for freight. Specific interventions to achieve these aims should include:-

- A station at Wantage/Grove. With even more housing planned here than already, there is demand, in particular for London, Swindon and Oxford. A station here would convert to rail a lot of traffic on local roads and the A420, A338 and A417, especially the latter to Didcot.

- Westward extensions of EWR train services to Swindon or preferably further; Oxford should not be considered the western end of the EWR route.

- Sufficient capacity and resilience for future growth of both passenger and freight services throughout the GWR mainline trunk route and the Didcot – Oxford – northwards corridors by whatever means such as signalling or track enhancements.

- We would welcome consideration of the development of a rail freight interchange terminal at Swindon, on the site of the former Honda car factory which is rail connected and currently allocated for warehousing with Amazon moving in. This site would, we believe, be well placed to serve a wide area of the south midlands and westwards and could achieve a substantial role in the decarbonisation of road freight by modal shift of the trunk haul to rail.

Please get in touch with us if you require any further clarification on any of the points we have raised; otherwise we look forward to hearing from you further in due course.

Richard Stow

Andrew McCallum

Chairman

Secretary

Railfuture Thames Valley Branch

** Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation, campaigning for improved rail services and promotion of the contribution rail can make to sustainable transport. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members, including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry, political parties and trades unions, and always seek to put rail users first, be they freight or passengers.*